



## News Release

**For Immediate Release:**

July 20, 2007

**Media Contact:**

Kevin Condra

Violence & Injury Prevention Program

(o) 801-538-6183 (m) 801-560-2778

Ann Evans

Utah State Parks

(o) 801-538-7429 (m) 801-230-8608

### **Know Before You Go Off-Road This Summer**

*Officials Urge Training, Helmet Use for Young Riders*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – As thousands of Utahns head to the mountains and deserts for off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation this summer, Utah State Parks and the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) are reminding riders of the importance of training for young riders, helmet use by all riders, and having only one rider at a time per OHV.

UDOH data show that in 2005, there were 1,565 OHV-related injuries treated in emergency departments (EDs); 23 of those were among children ages 4 and younger, 637 were among children ages 5 to 19 and 548 were adults ages 20-34. In 2005, the cost to Utah's health care system for OHV injuries totaled \$1.5 million for treatment in emergency departments and an additional \$5.9 million in hospitalization expenses.

The 15-19-year age group has the highest rate of ED visits for OHV injuries at 13.6 per 10,000 population, followed by 20-24-year-olds at 10.6 per 10,000. UDOH data show they are also the group who are least likely to wear helmets and most likely to suffer traumatic brain injuries (TBIs).

Ann Evans, Utah State Parks off-highway vehicle education coordinator, says most crashes happen because drivers overlook or ignore manufacturer specifications and Utah law.

Evans says OHV makers specify which vehicles are designed for one rider only, but too often drivers take friends or family, sometimes carrying two or more passengers at a time.

"More than one rider at a time is very dangerous," said Evans. "OHVs are not built for multiple riders because the added weight shifts the overall center of gravity, making the machine more likely to tip or roll over."

-MORE-

OHV riders are encouraged to take the *Know Before You Go!* OHV education course before operating on public lands, roads or trails. It is illegal for any child under age 8 to operate an OHV on public land.

Helmets are required by law for all OHV operators and passengers under the age of 18. “Despite the law, we see people riding ATVs without helmets all too often,” said Kevin Condra, spokesperson for the UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Program. “Helmets do save lives and are a good idea for riders of any age,” he added. Helmets must have at least a U.S. Department of Transportation approved safety rating for motorized use.

UDOH and State Parks officials recommend the following when enjoying OHVs:

- Always wear the right size helmet and make sure it is strapped on securely when riding off-highway vehicles.
- Have children take the Utah Division of Parks and Recreation *Know Before You Go* OHV training course.
- Allow children to ride only ATVs that the manufacturer indicates are appropriate for their age.
- Never carry passengers on an ATV designed for one rider.
- Don’t drive or ride on an ATV while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Don’t operate ATVs on paved roads. Their soft tires make them prone to rolling over on smooth surfaces.
- Wear protective gear like gloves, over-the-ankle boots, and goggles.

Education classes play an important role in injury prevention by teaching young riders and their parents about safe riding, weight distribution, handling, shifting, speed, and riding within your ability. Classes are available at several locations across the state.

For more information, please contact the Utah Division of State Parks and Recreation OHV Education office at 1-800-OHV-RIDE or visit [www.stateparks.utah.gov](http://www.stateparks.utah.gov).

# # #

*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*